

VZCZCXRO7002
OO RUEHDBU RUEHFL RUEHKW RUEHLA RUEHROV RUEHSR
DE RUEHFR #0143 0121408
ZNY CCCCC ZZH
O 121408Z JAN 07
FM AMEMBASSY PARIS
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 4177
INFO RUEHZL/EUROPEAN POLITICAL COLLECTIVE IMMEDIATE
RUEHSK/AMEMBASSY MINSK IMMEDIATE 0123

C O N F I D E N T I A L PARIS 000143

SIPDIS

SIPDIS

STATE FOR BELARUS DESK OFFICER LAURA JORDAN

E.O. 12958: DECL: 01/12/2017
TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [FR](#) [BO](#)
SUBJECT: NEW FRENCH AMBASSADOR TO MINSK WILL DELIVER STRONG
MESSAGE TO LUKASHENKO

Classified By: POLITICAL MINISTER COUNSELOR JOSIAH ROSENBLATT FOR REASON 1.4 (b) and (d)

1. (C) French MFA Belarus desk officer told us on January 12 that France's new Ambassador to Minsk, Mireille Musso, intends to deliver a strong message to President Lukashenko when she presents her credentials. Musso is expected to arrive in Minsk on January 16 and will request that her credentials ceremony take place as soon as possible. French diplomats, who met with Belarusian officials in late November, see the timing as particularly advantageous, given current relations between Minsk and Moscow. French officials' access to Lukashenko has been limited for some time, thus forcing them to engage through MFA officials whose real connections to the President are often unclear.

2. (C) French diplomats claim Musso will deliver the same message that A/S-equivalent Jean-Francois Terral delivered to one of the Deputy Prime Ministers in late November. Essentially, she will tell the President that the time has come for Belarus to engage with Western countries, and that the EU could help Minsk limit its direct confrontation with Moscow. Musso will explain the benefits of moving forward on an energy plan with the EU, as well as the advantages of the "not quite official" Shadow Action Plan. Normalizing relations with the EU would not only assist Belarus in its relationship with Russia, but help move forward its domestic economy. Otherwise, GSP privileges are already in line to be revoked by June 21 and other measures could follow. Musso will ask the President to show a sign of good will in the immediate future, such as releasing 12 political prisoners, notably Kozulin, and rescinding of restrictions against freedom of expression.

3. (C) While the French did not expect any transforming results out of their demarche, they did believe that a personal meeting with Lukashenko could help them better evaluate his position, and ensure that a clear message was getting through to the President.

Please visit Paris' Classified Website at:
<http://www.state.sgov.gov/p/eur/paris/index.cfm>

STAPLETON